

To Whom It May Concern,

As I listened to my brother's sentencing in 2017, a myriad of thoughts crossed my mind, but what lingered most was how I would cope with not having him in my life in the same way I had grown accustomed to. I knew I would miss his supportive nature, his gratitude toward family, and our lively debates. While he was incarcerated, we made a point to connect daily through phone calls and emails, and I always looked forward to our visits on Fridays. Throughout his time with the Department of Corrections, questions arose about his programming and preparations for reintegration, but no meaningful support was provided. At the time, it felt like the lack of programming was a form of validation; the Department of Corrections saw no need for such interventions, leading me to believe that my brother must not have had a significant issue.

Upon his release, I vividly recall my excitement for him and our family. While I knew there would be challenges, I assumed that his situation had to be better than it had been behind bars. He faced numerous hurdles during his reintegration, including complications with his ankle monitor and navigating the rigid protocols set by his parole officer. Yet, I believed that not being incarcerated had to be an improvement over his previous circumstances. I made the mistake of assuming everything was "OK" without taking the time to ask my brother how he was truly feeling. In doing so, I failed to provide the support he needed.

When I learned of his parole violation, I was devastated. I couldn't help but feel that I had failed him. I had not asked the hard questions or offered the support necessary for a successful transition back into the community. Instead, I made assumptions. I also misjudged the extent of his struggles with addiction and failed to recognize the signs that he was in distress. The pictures I sent him were another lapse in judgment, and I now realize they were not helpful or supportive.

Each day, I reflect on what has been lost during his time of incarceration—the moments we could have shared on the golf course or the conversations we would have had about the sporting events of the teams we both support. These moments, which once seemed so significant, no longer compare. In November 2022, my daughter Mabel was born, and I am deeply aware of how much it pains Josh not to have been there to experience the joy of becoming an uncle. It is equally heartbreaking to know that he cannot offer his support to her during these formative years.

As he moves forward with his sentencing, I sincerely hope that Josh and our family are given an opportunity to help him rebuild his life and reintegrate into society in a meaningful and productive way. We, as a family, have let him down, and the system has, in many ways, also failed him as both an inmate and a parolee. We respectfully ask for the chance to make amends for our mistakes and to support him in a way that will allow him to thrive. Our commitment to his recovery and success is steadfast, and we are prepared to do everything necessary to help him succeed moving forward.

Respectfully,

*Matthew Sherwood*